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GAS AND ELECTRIC UTILITY SHUT-OFF

The Public Service Commission regulations summarized here apply to gas and electric utilities but not to fuel oil or propane gas. During extreme seasonal conditions, termination is **NOT** permitted when the National Weather Service:

- reports temperatures at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit at 8:00 a.m. measured in DE within 50 miles of the subject dwelling
- forecast predicts the Heat Index may equal or exceed 105 degrees Fahrenheit on the date of scheduled termination measured in DE within 50 miles of the subject dwelling

Service may be terminated after the extreme conditions are no longer in effect. Termination is prohibited if an occupant of the premises has been certified by a physician or Christian Science practitioner to be so ill that his or her health or recovery would be adversely affected by the cut-off.

REQUIRED NOTICE

During the heating and cooling seasons, the consumer must have 14 calendar days notice prior to shut-off of services. Notice must be sent by mail to the billing address. In addition, the utility must notify or attempt to notify the consumer with two phone calls for heating season cut-off, one after 6 p.m., and one phone call for cooling season cut-off. Final notification must be a reasonable and good faith attempt at personal contact at the premises by an employee of the utility who can make payment arrangements with the consumer. If the billing address is different than the location of service (e.g. landlord), the written notice must also be given to the occupant of the premises.

The written notice must:

- include the date of termination (at least 14 days after notice).
- advise the consumer that service cannot be terminated if there is a good faith dispute in the amount of the bill. Consumer must agree to pay undisputed portion.

- advise the consumer that a reasonable installment arrangement to pay the current bill and make payment on arrearages will avoid cut-off
- advise the consumer that there are charitable and government agencies that may offer assistance and include the contact information
- state that termination is prohibited by Delaware law if an occupant of the premises has been certified by a physician or Christian Science practitioner to be so ill that his or her health or recovery would be adversely affected by the cut-off.

If the consumer is in an **apartment complex or mobile home community** where service is provided through a **master meter** and not individual meters the written notice must be sent to the owner or other person at billing address at least 14 calendar days prior to termination which includes the above information. In addition, the occupants shall be given written notice at least 10 calendar days prior to termination in order to arrange a guarantee of payment for the service. The notice can be mailed to each “occupant” OR posted in the common area of each building accessible to the utility. The notice for a multiple occupancy dwelling unit must also be mailed 14 days in advance to the Public Service Commission and the Division of the Public Advocate.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

The first step is to **contact your utility** – Delmarva or Delaware Electric Coop – to arrange for a payment plan to prevent the shut off. Low income consumers may be able to get financial assistance. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is administered by Catholic Charities under contract with the State. The referral numbers are:

- Kent County: (302) 674-1782
- New Castle County: (302) 654-9295
- Sussex County: (302) 856-6310

More information can be found on line at www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dssc/liheap.html or by calling the Consumer Protection Unit at 800-220-5424 from anywhere in Delaware or at 577-8600 in New Castle County.